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FM AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 8212
INFO RUCPDOC/USDOC WASHDC
RUEHC/DEPT OF LABOR WASHDC
RUEHZM/GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS ABU DHABI 000194

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STATE FOR NEA/ARP, NEA/RA, DRL
STATE PASS TO USTR FOR AARON ROSENBERG
USDOC FOR ITA/MAC

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: UAE MINISTRY OF LABOR INVITES PUBLIC COMMENT ON PROPOSED NEW LABOR LAW

¶11. (SBU) Summary. On February 5 the UAE Ministry of Labor published a revised labor law on a special web site and invited public comment. The law mainly provides for new ways to encourage "Emiratization." Contrary to what Embassy had been led to believe, the law does not adddress collective bargaining or rights of association although it does contain a reference to dispute resolution. End Summary.

¶12. (U) On February 5, the UAE Ministry of Labor published the draft of its revised labor law on the internet and invited the public to comment on it. The www.uaelabourlaw.net website will remain active for two months. UAE Minister of Labor, Dr. Ali Al Kaabi, told the press that his ministry will use the public feedback and suggestions in deciding what will be included in the draft law before it is submitted to the UAE Federal National Council (FNC) for final approval.

¶13. (U) The draft law mainly focuses on measures to boost nationalization of jobs for Emiratis and ways to combat illegal workers and illegal labor firms. The law also stipulates that "an employer has the right to terminate a worker's services if he stops, participates or instigates others to stop working". We have not been able to find any reference to collective bargaining or rights of association.

¶14. (SBU) On February 5 shortly before the law was put on the web, Econoff met with Obaid al Zahmai, Assistant Undersecretary of the Ministry of Labor (MOL), and Yousif al Noor, Labor Advisor to the MOL, to discuss the proposed labor law. Neither al Zahmai nor al Noor would comment if the new law contained labor union or collective bargaining provisions, but said the proposed law would include provisions for settlement of labor disputes. They explained that the Minister would announce that the law would be put out for comment at an "invitation only" event, but declined to extend an invitation to econoff.

¶15. (SBU) Comment. The absence of any provisions for collective bargaining or rights of association is disappointing, especially since Ministry of Labor officials have repeatedly stressed that the law would comply with International Labor Organization standards. The fact that the Ministry of Labor (MOL) posted the draft law online and is accepting comments on the law, however, is a positive step forward in terms of UAEG transparency, one Embassy has been encouraging for several years. Econoff attempted to contact the MOL to ascertain why the new law does not contain any provisions for labor unions or collective bargaining, but so far has been unable to reach officials. Post will continue to follow up with the MOL. End comment.

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